

REFLECTION FOR TUESDAY SECOND WEEK OF EASTER 2021

Acts 4:32-37 John 3:7-15

The birth of a child is one of the greatest causes of joy in human experience, especially for the parents of the child.

Life is never the same for a couple after the birth of their child. This new life has an extraordinary impact on their lives from the moment the child is born.

There is something wonderfully mysterious about the birth of every child. We encounter something of the mystery of God in and through every human birth. The spontaneous response to such mysterious new life is thanksgiving.

In this morning's gospel reading, Jesus speaks to Nicodemus of a different kind of birth. He speaks to him of the need to be 'born from above' or 'born of the Spirit'. Although a teacher in Israel, Nicodemus responds to Jesus' words about this kind of birth with the question, 'How can that be possible?'

But what does it mean to be born of the Spirit? How can we be born of the Spirit? Our mothers give birth to us. How does God's life come alive in us through the Holy Spirit?

Well, don't forget Adam. He did not fully come alive until God breathed life into him. Perhaps Jesus is saying that we can be physically alive day by day, but we will only be fully alive, living a life that has deep and lasting meaning, if we allow God's life, God's breath, to bring us to the fullness of life!

At the end of the passage, Jesus says that the Holy Spirit is like the wind. Jesus said, "you can't really see the wind... but you can hear the sound it makes." Did you catch that? Jesus points out that we cannot actually see the wind – but we can hear and see the effects of the wind.

And that, says Jesus, is how it is with the Holy Spirit. We cannot usually see the Holy Spirit. But you can tell the Spirit is present if you see certain effects.

Back in Genesis 1, the Spirit of God brought order out of chaos; it brought beauty out of confusion.

In The Acts of the Apostles, the Spirit enabled the followers of Jesus to be courageous, to break down barriers, to create unity, to speak effectively about faith. In the midst of a pandemic, don't we need the Spirit to do that through us?

In John's Gospel, the Spirit taught people the truth and filled them with mercy and peace. In these stressful days, don't we need the Spirit to do the same for us and through us?

When we allow the Spirit of the Lord to shape our lives, others can see something of the life of God in and through our lives.

The first reading shows us one way in which the Spirit of God took flesh in the life of the early church. Within that community of faith, no member was ever in need as they shared the goods and there was mutual responsibility. Such a life was the fruit of the Spirit's activity among them. The life of God is a life of love given and received.

Perhaps today we could reflect on our own attitudes to material goods: how we acquire them, how we use them, to what extent we share our material blessings with those in genuine need and not just out of our surplus.

Our calling as individual believers and as a community of faith is to allow the Holy Spirit to take flesh in our lives, to allow the Spirit to shape and mould us. so that others can see heavenly things through our way of living and our manner of relating to one another. When that happens, our lives will give expression to God's personal love for the world.

Fr Patrick.